

VZCZCXRO6825
RR RUEHAST
DE RUEHDBU #0227/01 0441138
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 131138Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0207
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 0033
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0030
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0033
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0073
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 0029
RUEHAST/USOFFICE ALMATY 0008

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000227

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR SCA/CACEN
DEPT PASS USAID (FFP-PNovick, OFDA-RAndrew, AConvery)
ALMATY FOR USAID

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: Ambassador Jacobson Declares Humanitarian Disaster in
Tajikistan

¶1. Summary and action request: Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson declares a humanitarian disaster in Tajikistan due to severe food insecurity, exacerbated by a nationwide energy crisis and extreme winter weather. Ambassador and regional mission request that DCHA/OFDA immediately commit USD 50,000 to respond with food and non-food assistance for distribution to the most vulnerable population, and consider further emergency assistance of USD 931,340 through USAID Food For Peace implementing partners CARE, Save the Children, and Mercy Corps. End summary and action request.

¶2. Tajikistan remains the poorest of the former Soviet republics and still suffers from the after affects of a bloody civil war that ended in 1997. However, recent shocks to the country are resulting in increased suffering and loss of life that will continue without swift international assistance. In addition to the food security crisis, Tajikistan is in the midst of serious financial woes that threaten the economic future of the country, particularly the agriculture sector which remains the engine of the economy. An energy crisis also grips the country during one of the coldest winters in the country's history. Most of the country currently is without any power, while some regions have an hour or two a day. The capital is currently under rationing that permits five hours of electricity in the morning, and five hours in the evening, although some households receive much less. A fuel shortage also threatens the little heat that some homes still receive.

¶3. Disturbing reports from USAID Food For Peace (FFP) implementers which began in early December indicated that the already tenuous food security situation was deteriorating further. A recently concluded rapid food assessment in two different districts in rural Tajikistan by Save the Children found that households had only between 3 days and one month of food stocks available to get them through the winter. Households generally maintain stocks that will last them until at least the end of April. Households are selling their livestock to raise money. Additionally, the quality of food is declining, and people are eating less although spending more. Children were visibly sick in almost all households visited during the assessment, and many households experienced a death in the family over the last few months related to food, cold, and lack of medical care.

¶4. The food security cluster of Tajikistan, a group of humanitarian organizations led by the World Food Program (WFP), concluded in its situation report of February 11, 2008, that a food security emergency currently exists in Tajikistan and, moreover, there is a reasonable likelihood that the situation will further deteriorate. The report estimates that more than 550,000 people are seriously affected by the emergency, and at least 260,000 will require food and cash assistance to survive the next three months. Surveys by

food security cluster members found that food and fuel supplies are almost completely exhausted, and high food prices combined with poor harvests in 2007 are forcing families to sell off assets for food and medicine. Migration increased in December and homes are being abandoned. The energy crisis further resulted in the closing of many hospitals, clinics, and schools due to the cold and unhealthy conditions. In an effort to alleviate life threatening conditions, the food security cluster proposes an immediate response of food and non-food aid, and cash disbursement programs.

15. The government of Tajikistan response to date: the GOTI called several meetings over the last several weeks to brief donors and aid organizations on the various crises, including meetings organized by the Committee on Emergency Situations of Tajikistan. Correspondence received from the Prime Minister on February 4, 2008, describes the situation as "critical" as a result of the unusual cold temperatures, shortage of water and energy, and the resulting impact on food supply and security. The GOTI requests assistance from donor countries in order to increase the food supply to the population, as well as energy for the agricultural and industrial sectors. The government had not issued a formal disaster declaration as of February 13, but findings by government agencies, UN and non-governmental organizations confirm the necessity of immediate assistance for food and non-food commodities, fuel, generators, and other assistance.

16. The Mission proposes to coordinate its response with the United Nations, which will submit its final Flash Appeal as early as this week, to provide relief and support to the GOTI and to the affected population. The UN Flash Appeal proposes to assist Tajikistan with emergency food, increase water supplies, assist hospitals and critical care health facilities, and provide non-food aid to the

DUSHANBE 00000227 002 OF 002

most vulnerable population. The total funding required to implement the UN Flash Appeal is close to USD 26.5 million.

17. The mission proposes that USG assistance take the form of emergency food and non-food aid distributed and coordinated through USAID FFP implementing partners CARE, Save the Children, and Mercy Corps. The consortium requests, and the mission supports, emergency funding for Tajikistan in the amount of USD 981,340. The request explains that the rural population in Tajikistan is left with few remaining coping strategies for mitigating the increased level of food insecurity. This consortium of humanitarian organizations is well positioned to respond to the food emergency in Tajikistan and implement emergency relief activities, with large coverage in most regions of the country. The proposed emergency response includes both food and non-food items, direct cash disbursements, fuel, heating appliances, and clothing and bedding.

18. Mission will keep addressees updated as additional information becomes available.

Jacobson